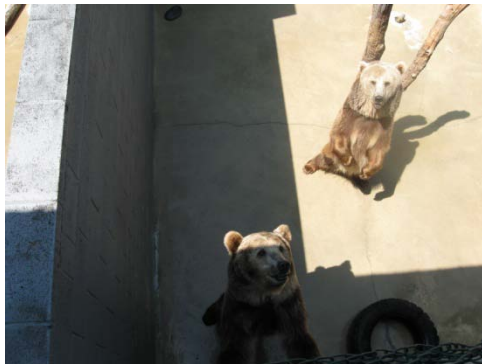


Site Visit to Cherokee Bear Zoo, Cherokee, NC

June 2 and 3, 2010

Report prepared by Laurie J. Gage, DVM, Dipl. ACZM

I accompanied ACI Andrea D'Ambrosio on a site visit to the Cherokee Bear Zoo on June 2, 2010. We posed as tourists and paid for entrance and purchased food to feed the bears. We were there to answer a complaint regarding the conditions in which the bears are held and to evaluate the behavior of the bears. At this zoo there was one Grizzly bear cub born in January to "Marge" and "Elvis". The cub appeared bright and alert and appeared to have good body condition. It appeared slightly underweight. It was fed a diet of Esbilac mixed 3:1 (water to powder) and apparently got 4 -5 8 oz bottles per day. This bear cub was used for photo shoots. While we were there we saw about 15 members of the public. We did not see the cub used for photos. We observed the behavior of all of the bears. The bears are all housed in "pit" type enclosures. The two Grizzly bears "Lucky" and "Layla" had the smallest enclosure with a small pool and a tree trunk for them to rub on. Lucky had hair loss on the proximal medial side of both forelegs and across the chest. I was later told by ACI Cindy Lisle that this was seasonal, thought to be due to allergies, and the hair grew back quickly after a month or two.



The bears Elvis and Marge had a larger enclosure with a small pool but no upright tree to rub upon. The Black bears "Jenny" and "Jake" showed the most stereotypic behavior; pacing in a set pattern when the public was not present. The four Black bears housed together in the largest enclosure also exhibited some stereotypic pacing behavior when the public was not present.

There was a young adult white tiger housed in an approximately 80 square foot enclosure in the upper area where the public viewed the bears. The only water available to this tiger was in a "Lixit" type water bottle fixed to the cage. I observed the tiger

drinking from the water bottle. He spent about 4 minutes licking and biting at the metal tube that delivered the water.

We went downstairs to a small zoo that housed some primates, goats, alpacas, a donkey, a calf, lemurs, and two adult orange “Bengal” type tigers. The male tiger appeared to be declawed and was lame (favoring) his right rear leg. He was pacing and about half of his tongue was protruding. He was moderately overweight. The male appeared to have a moderate neurologic problem. The female appeared to be moderately overweight and did not appear lame. They were housed in an approximately 300 square foot enclosure with a shallow pool at one end and no elevated resting areas. The enclosure had a complete top, appropriate shade, and an accessible denbox.



Two of the three lemurs were grossly overweight and the other was overweight. The goats and donkey had an excessive accumulation of feces on the ground in their pen. The young alpacas and calf had poor quality hay covering their enclosure, which needed to be cleaned. Both alpacas had their full hair coat and were both dirty and had mud accumulated on their legs and abdomens.

We visited the facility again on June 3 with ACI Cindy Lisle as an official USDA inspection and site visit. We toured the facility with Mr. Cooper, the licensee. We recommended to the licensee that a water bucket be placed in the enclosure with the white tiger. ACI Lisle stated that while the lemurs were overweight, they had lost some weight since her last visit. We recommended they continue to make efforts to keep the animals on appropriate diets to encourage weight loss. We examined the diets and found the hay stored for the hoofed stock to be damp, of fair-poor quality, and in some samples I removed from the bale, I could smell mold. We asked about the diet for the bears which consists of bread (wheat and white), apples, lettuce, and a small amount of dog food. We were told the bears get meat during the winter, but not in the summer. The tigers are fed a combination of a variety of meat (with no bones) and whole chicken. There were some tubes of Nebraska brand food at the bottom of the freezer but it did not appear as if these tubes had been disturbed in some time, and it seems

doubtful that the tigers are fed Nebraska very often. I asked the licensee what he feeds the tiger cubs when he has cubs. He stated he usually gets cubs when they are about 8 weeks old (stating that he thought it was not legal to ship them before that age). He said he fed them Esbilac mixed 4 parts water : 1 part powder and he bought the Esbilac in 22 pound bags. He said over time (2 months or so) he gradually increased the strength of Esbilac to 2:1 (water: powder). We spoke with his wife who stated they also mix in rice baby cereal into the Esbilac (to correct stool problems). They stated they knew people who had cubs that had died from aspiration pneumonia. I informed them that the diet was too dilute at 4:1 and that rice baby cereal was not an optimal diet for these animals. They stated that the rice cereal made the formula "thicker" and improved their stool. I suggested adding chicken or turkey baby food to the bottle. They stated they used beef baby food (which may be contributing to the stool problems). I told the licensee I would send him some information about hand rearing cubs and general tiger nutrition. Powered Esbilac should be made up to approximately 2 parts water to 1 part powdered Esbilac. This may be done gradually over 2 to 3 days (not 1 – 2 months) I believe their formula is too dilute during a significant time they are feeding the tiger cubs. I believe it is likely too dilute for the bear cub as well. They need to have the formulas approved in writing by their veterinarian.

In general we felt the bears could be provided with more enrichment and made some suggestions. The diet for the bears was not optimal but the condition and demeanor of the bears suggested the diet was adequate. They should make an effort to replace some of the white bread they feed with a more nutritious diet approved in writing by their veterinarian.

The diet for the tigers was adequate but I informed the licensee about how much calcium is needed to balance the diet if boneless meat is being fed (5 grams calcium carbonate for every pound of ground meat fed).

The licensee stated he plans to move the two older tigers to his home in the next month, and the white tiger housed in the smaller enclosure could then be housed in the concrete enclosure in the lower zoo area. The licensee is aware that concrete is not an optimal surface to house tigers. We also suggested he try to make the tiger pool deeper, as it was only a very shallow pool for them to sit in. We pointed out the hooped stock needed to be cleaned daily.

The facility, while not optimal, meets AWA standards.

Site Visit to Cherokee Bear Zoo, 55-C-0118, Cherokee, NC

June 2 and 3, 2010

Report prepared by Andrea D'Ambrosio, ACI

Here is my summary of my visit with Dr. Laurie Gage and Cindy Lisle to the Cherokee Bear Zoo (55-C-0118) in Cherokee, NC. We visited the facility over a two day period (June 2-3 2010) to answer a complaint and evaluate the behaviors and living conditions of the bears.

Dr. Gage and I arrived at the Cherokee Bear Zoo at 11:30 on June 2, 2010. We paid the facility admission and went in as "tourists" to observe the bears from a guest perspective. I purchased three trays of food for public feeding and purchased dog food from the coin machines on the observation platform. The food trays consisted of a slice of white bread, one leaf of romaine lettuce and ¼ apple sliced. The food all appeared in good condition. Of the food items offered, the apple slices and dog food were the most sought after from the bears and therefore probably the most reinforcing. This facility has four bear "pit" style enclosures and ten adult bears. There was a five month old cub in a wire enclosure at the top of the observation platform.

The cub is used for photo shoots and is on a bottled formula several times a day. I observed the cub running around and actively playing in the enclosure, but it would also sit at the front of the enclosure and bite at its paws and arms.

Almost all of the bears at the facility have learned to offer various behaviors or "tricks" for the food items being thrown in by the public. These behaviors include standing up and "clapping" their paws together; sitting back on their hindquarters and holding their feet up; laying back full stretch on the ground etc. As soon as the first Grizzly bear saw me with food, he (Lucky) stood up and began to "clap" his paws together. Which, I reinforced with an apple slice. While all the bears stand up, each behavior observed was specific to an individual bear. Only the Grizzly bear would stand up and clap his paws, and only two of the Black bears (Marge and Elvis) sat back and held their paws. This indicates to me, that these behaviors were not "trained" by the zoo staff, but these behaviors were "captured" and then reinforced unknowingly through public feedings. This means that at one time, the Grizzly bear stood up and started to "clap" his paws together, and more than likely a guest saw this and gave the bear a food item which then reinforced and "captured" what the bear had just done. The bear then begins to "clap" more often only to be reinforced more with food items. This became a very rewarding behavior to the bear and the bear now continues to offer this behavior frequently when guests are seen with food trays. Because the public is associated with

food items, public feeding of the bears at this facility appears to be a highly enriching and rewarding experience for them.

During my “public” feedings of the bears, we observed one of the black bears (Ping, Pong, Billy Jean, or Boomer) was lying down and when bread or lettuce was thrown towards the bear, the bear did not get up and showed no interest in those food items. It took several slices of apple to get the bear up and interested in food. There was no evidence of lameness in the bear, so this indicates to me that this bear is given an ample diet which has allowed him/her to become a picky eater and choose not to get up for less desirable food items. The largest enclosure housing four bears (Ping, Pong, Billy Jean and Boomer) had recently been cleaned and there was evidence of cleaning chemicals (odoban) still on the ground of the enclosure. There were a few times that even though I and others tried to get the food item (bread) directly in the bears mouth, it would fall on the ground, in the chemical area and then get consumed by the bears. There is a concern for potential contamination for the food items in this regard. The facility should clean and rinse the area prior to opening to the public to avoid this issue.

The bear pits at this facility are not uniform in size and do not have the same or equivalent enrichment items in each enclosure. There is a shallow water pool in each pit and I did witness multiple bears getting into the water. Several of the concrete floors were wet from the bears getting in and out of the pools. There is a tire or a log in each pit and I also witnessed the bears interacting with these items in and out of the water. Three of the four pits had a vertical log in the middle of the enclosure that acted as a scratching post for the bears in those enclosures and the bears actively used them as such.

When the bears were not actively seeking food from guests or interacting with items in the pit, almost all of the bears would begin to pace or move in a stereotypic pattern. Stereotypic pattern behavior was slightly different in different bears. One of the black bears (Jake/Jenny) would do a walk pattern with a slide to his gait and at the back corner would turn/sway his head toward the right each time. There was an obvious loss of paint on the concrete at the back corner indicating this is where the bear turns frequently. Another black bear (Ping, Pong, Billy Jean, or Boomer) would walk in a tight circular pattern around a tire and log in its enclosure. There was also an obvious loss of paint in the far left corner of the enclosure indicating the bears frequently rub against this area. Stereotypic patterns usually develop in captive animals that do not have adequate mental stimulation or enrichment. These bears will break from their stereotypic pacing for food items and it is possible that some of the stereotypic patterns have also been reinforced through food items making them more likely to engage in these pattern behaviors. Additional enrichment items will help reduce the amount of stereotypic pacing in these bears, but because this pacing is self reinforcing and has

been reinforced by the public with food items, it is very unlikely that the behaviors will ever completely diminish.

This facility was inspected the following day and I was able to see that all of the pits have den areas that are accessible throughout the day, allowing the bears to get out of the elements or get away from each other if needed. I was also able to get a good visual of their paws and did not observe any irritation from being on damp concrete. Two of the bears (Elvis/Marge) were shifted into their den and we were able to walk into an enclosure. The noise heard from people above along with traffic and water seemed to blend together as a white noise to me. The bears did not appear stressed due to the sound, probably due to habituation that would naturally occur over time. While talking with the facility owner and home inspector, several suggestions were made for additional enrichment at this facility to encourage natural behaviors:

Nesting/Bedding down- Adding hay or straw to the den area or in the main part of the enclosure.

Foraging- Using large plastic tubs and cutting holes in for food items. Closing the tubs and allowing the bears to knock the tubs around for the food items to come out randomly.

Olfactory- Using fruit flavored chap sticks and marking the walls and floor area, using various scents (vanilla, cinnamon, cherry etc) to mark on the walls or food items encouraging the bears to move around the exhibit and stimulating sense of smell.

We also encouraged the facility to add vertical logs to every pit to allow the bears to stand up and scratch themselves. Boomer-balls and other enrichment items were also suggested for “play” and a widening or deepening of the pool area was also suggested. I also encouraged the facility to put signs educating the public on what enrichment tools and items were used.



Inspection Report

BARRY COGGINS

Customer ID: 3281

Certificate: 55-C-0118

Site: 001

CHEROKEE BEAR ZOO

CHEROKEE BEAR ZOO

PO BOX 1187

Type: ROUTINE INSPECTION

Date: Jun-03-2010

BRYSON CITY, NC 28713

3.125 (a)
FACILITIES, GENERAL.

REPEAT

(a) Structural strength. The facility must be constructed of such material and of such strength as appropriate for the animals involved. The indoor and outdoor housing facilities shall be structurally sound and shall be maintained in good repair to protect the animals from injury and to contain the animals.

***The wooden supports for the adult tiger enclosure are rotten. The center support is not structurally sound. The enclosures must be structurally sound to contain the animal. Supports must be repaired or replaced. This affects two animals.

3.129 (a)
FEEDING.

(a) The food shall be wholesome, palatable, and free from contamination and of sufficient quantity and nutritive value to maintain all animals in good health. The diet shall be prepared with consideration for the age, species, condition, size, and type of the animal. Animals shall be fed at least once a day except as dictated by hibernation, veterinary treatment, normal fasts, or other professionally accepted practices.

***The hay is stored in the basement on the floor. The bales are damp and smell moldy. Moldy food can be hazardous to the animals health. Hay should be stored appropriately up off the floor to prevent contamination. The hay in the enclosure being fed to the goats is of marginal quality. Food should be wholesome, free from contamination, and of sufficient nutritional value to maintain the health of the animals. This affects 12 animals. To be corrected by: 10 Jun 2010

3.131 (a)
SANITATION.

(a) Cleaning of enclosures. Excreta shall be removed from primary enclosures as often as necessary to prevent contamination of the animals contained therein and to minimize disease hazards and to reduce odors. When enclosures are cleaned by hosing or flushing, adequate measures shall be taken to protect the animals confined in

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CINDY L LISLE, A C I

USDA, APHIS, Animal Care

Date:

Title:

ANIMAL CARE INSPECTOR

Inspector 1064

Jun-03-2010

(b)(6), (b)(7)c

Received By:

BARRY COGGINS

Date:

Title:

OWNER

Jun-03-2010

JUN 16 2010



Inspection Report

such enclosures from being directly sprayed with the stream of water or wetted involuntarily.

***The petting zoo area has an excessive amount of feces accumulated. Some of the animals have feces caked on there hair coat. The excessive feces is attracting flies. Excessive feces accumulating in the enclosures can cause disease. Enclosures must be cleaned often enough to prevent contamination of the animals and to minimize disease. This affects 12 animals.
To be corrected by: 10 Jun 2010.

3.131 (c)

REPEAT

SANITATION.

(c) Housekeeping. Premises (buildings and grounds) shall be kept clean and in good repair in order to protect the animals from injury and to facilitate the prescribed husbandry practices set forth in this subpart. Accumulations of trash shall be placed in designated areas and cleared as necessary to protect the health of the animals.

***The enclosure housing Lucky and Lala has chipped area in the pool. There are several dens that have the concrete is chipped at the den entrance. The enclosure housing the tiger Bonita has large wide cracks in the floor. Cracked and chipped concrete can absorb feces and urine and cannot be sanitized appropriately. Proper sanitation is necessary for the health and well being of the animals. Concrete needs to be replaced or repaired. This affects 6 animals.

An exit briefing was conducted with the licensee.

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JUN 16 2010